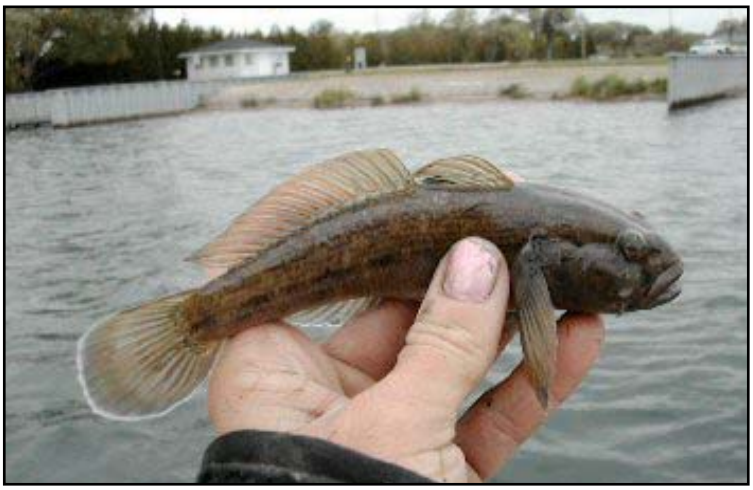
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management



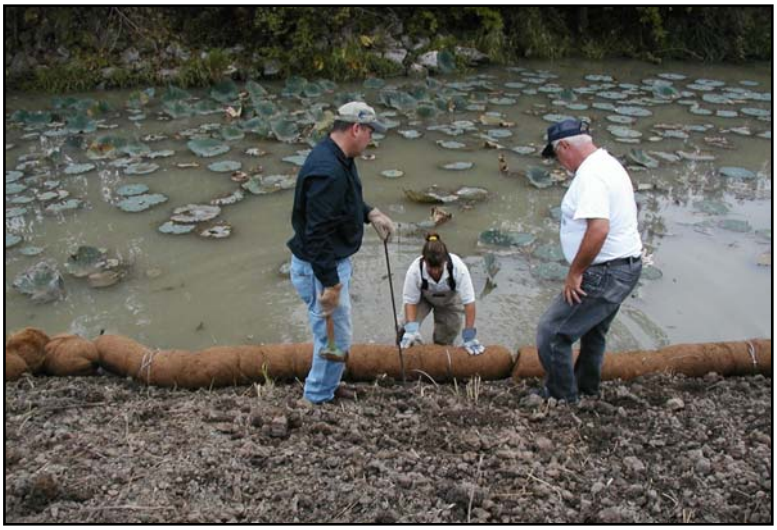
Biologists Sample for Aquatic Nuisance Species

From September 26 to 28, 2005 Fishery Biologists Adam Kowalski and Scott Koproski completed bottom trawling for aquatic nuisance species in northern Lake Huron and the St. Mary's River. Surveillance for exotic species like Eurasian ruffe and round goby is conducted annually to locate newly established populations and monitor populations at existing sites. Kowalski and Koproski trawled 7 sites using the RV Sentinel. Round goby were found in all the Lake Huron sites but not in any of the St. Mary's River sites. Ruffe were not found at any of the sites sampled. This is similar to the 2004 trawling results.

This project is designed to monitor exotic species populations and prevent their spread if possible. This is consistent with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Fisheries Program Vision for the Future to prevent new introductions of aquatic nuisance species.

Adam Kowalski

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management



Volunteers Restore Habitat During National Public Lands Day

On September 24th, the Alpena Fisheries Resources Office (FRO) and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) hosted a National Public Lands Day that included a small scale habitat restoration project. This project is an extension of what was completed last year during the 2003, 2004 National Public Lands Day event.

A group of volunteers applied bank stabilization techniques along one hundred and forty feet of Crane Creek. Soft engineering techniques were utilized during the project. Materials utilized for this project included coconut filter fabric, coir logs, and native live plants and seed mixes. The materials used are completely biodegradable, within a 5 year span, after the vegetation has been established.

Crane Creek is a low gradient stream which flows through the refuge and empties into Lake Erie through a flooded river mouth. The creek provides habitat for migratory birds and Lake Erie fish species and is a vital link between the refuge and the lake. Bank stabilization techniques used in this project will enhance the habitat and reduce sedimentation into the creek without the use of large rock.

Examination of the 2003 and 2004 sites showed that although the bank was dominated by thistle, native grasses such as big blue stem as well as forbs, were also present and beginning to dominate in the area that was completed in 2003. Within the next two years the native vegetation is expected to out-compete the thistle and provide stabilization roots for the bank as well as food and cover for wildlife.

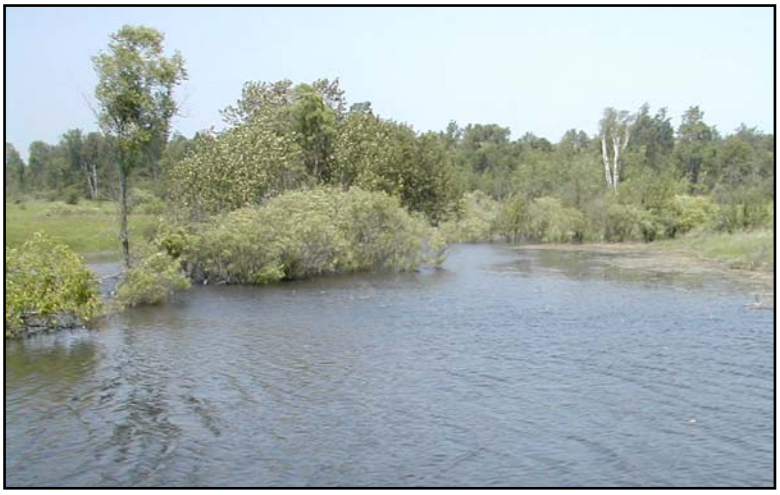
Biologist Susan Wells and Public Use Specialist Rebecca Hinkle planned this as a National Public Lands Day event to allow people the opportunity to become involved in habitat management of a small portion of the refuge. Individuals involved with the project responded with positive attitudes towards the restoration project and enjoyed the opportunity for the hands on work. Many of the volunteers were from the 2003 and 2004 event and plan on returning for the event in 2006. This project provides an opportunity which is not usually offered to the public, and their efforts can be viewed from the walking trails for everyone to see. Plans have already begun between the Alpena FRO and Ottawa NWR to repeat the project on a larger scale in 2006. Some of the volunteers will be spending their winter growing native vegetation for next years project.

This accomplishment provided multiple resource outcomes by integrating educational and outreach opportunity with on the ground restoration. One hundred and forty feet of creek bank was stabilized while educating volunteers on the advantages of using soft engineering techniques. Ten volunteers participated in the event. This project was collaboration between the Alpena FRO and Ottawa NWR and addresses multiple Fisheries Vision Priorities including public use and aquatic habitat conservation and management.

Susan Wells

End of Year Fiscal Challenges

The end of the fiscal year is always a challenging time for all, and this year was no exception. Partners for Fish and Wildlife Coordinator (PFW) Rawlings out of the Alpena FRO worked hard to gather final bids for wetland restoration projects in order to obligate remaining 2005 funds. Construction came to a halt in September due to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Several excavating companies from Northern Michigan traveled down to Mississippi and Louisiana to assist with recovery efforts, and one of the companies was scheduled to complete PFW projects. These projects will not be completed until either early winter of 2005 or spring of 2006.



Rawlings completed 2005 monitoring requirements, and finalized a number of end-of-the-year reports through HabITS, FIS, grants for FONS, and additional required reports.

Completion of aquatic habitat restoration projects contribute toward the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" component of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program at the Alpena Fishery Resources Office restored 19 acres of wetlands on 6 sites in 5 counties of Northern Michigan. 8,500 acres of Fletcher Floodwater impoundment (Thunder Bay River watershed) were improved by the stocking of native weevils that eat the invasive Eurasian watermilfoil. Four stream bank erosion sites on the Thunder Bay River (Montmorency and Alpena Counties) were restored improving four miles of river. Three erosion sites on the Pine River were restored improving water quality on 5 river-miles. Three erosion sites on the Maple River will be restored in early summer 2006. Five miles of the Upper Black River (Montmorency and Cheboygan Counties) were improved for fish habitat by strategic placement of large woody debris, and twenty-five beaver dams were removed in the same watershed opening 10 river miles to fish passage. Ten beaver dams were opened in the Greene Creek watershed on a private landowners' property to open habitat and reduce water temperatures for brook trout. One road-stream crossing site was restored, opening 2 river-miles on the Jordan River (Antrim County), and two project sites will be completed in 2006 opening 13 miles on the Maple and AuSable River watersheds.

Heather Rawlings

Cooperation with Native Americans

Alpena FRO Assists Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority with Walleye Assessments in 1836 Treaty Waters

During the week of September 19, Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski traveled to Sault Ste. Marie, MI to assist the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA) with their annual juvenile walleye assessment of the St. Marys River. Using the Alpena

FRO's electrofishing vessel, Koproski and 2 CORA staff sampled 4 locations in the St Marys River system (Waiska Bay, Lake Nicolet, Lake George, Sugar Island Side Channel) over 4 nights. The objective of this work is to determine the percent contribution of hatchery reared walleye to the St. Marys River walleye population and to index juvenile walleye abundance. Hatchery stocked walleye are immersed in oxytetracycline (OTC) prior to release. OTC leaves a mark on calcified structures like otoliths and vertebrae that can be detected in the lab. Data collected will also be used to determine appropriate stocking levels and stocking locations for this system. Staff from the Alpena FRO has been assisting CORA with this walleye assessment for the past 13 years.

Assessment of walleye in the St. Marys River is another example of the Alpena FRO's commitment to the following Fisheries Vision Priorities: Aquatic Species Conservation and Management and Cooperation with Native Americans. Walleye are both a recreationally and commercially important species in 1836 Treaty waters. The Alpena FRO will continue to evaluate stocking success by CORA in the future which will benefit the resource and all harvesting parties.

Scott Koproski

Service Biologist Chairs Modeling Subcommittee Meeting for 1836 Treaty Waters

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO attended and chaired the September 22-23 meeting of the Modeling Subcommittee (MSC) of the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC). The primary focus of this meeting was to generate preliminary 2006 harvest limits for lake whitefish management units in 1836 Treaty waters of lakes Huron, Superior, and Michigan, although other technical matters were discussed. As stipulated in the 2000 Consent Decree, preliminary lake whitefish harvest limits must be calculated by the MSC, reviewed by the TFC, and presented to the parties to the decree by November 1 each year.

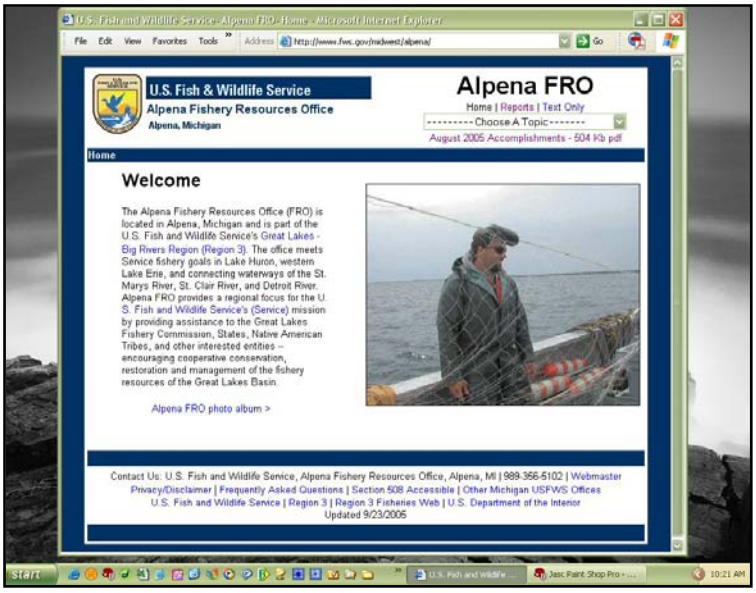
In addition to performing lake whitefish model analyses, biologist Woldt ran the MSC meeting ensuring all agenda items were discussed and kept meeting minutes. A preliminary draft of the September 22-23 MSC meeting minutes was mailed to MSC members for review.

Preliminary lake whitefish harvest limits were presented to the TFC for review on October 4. The MSC will complete final lake whitefish harvest limits and present them to the TFC at its December 2 meeting.

Harvest limits produced at this meeting, when reviewed by the parties and approved, will become binding 2006 lake whitefish harvest limits for 1836 Treaty waters. These harvest limits will allow lake whitefish fisheries to be executed while still protecting the biological integrity of the lake whitefish stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while meeting the needs of tribal communities under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Cooperation with Native Americans" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Aaron Woldt

Public Use



Alpena Fishery Resources Web Site Revised and Updated

The Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO) web site, located on the Internet at http://www.fws.gov/midwest/alpena, was revised and updated for posting in late September. The Alpena FRO, located in northeastern Michigan meets Service fishery priorities and objectives in Lake Huron and western Lake Erie, including connecting waters of the St. Marys River and the St. Clair / Detroit River waterway.

The web site provides an overview of Alpena FRO aquatic species and habitat conservation and management activities. Activities include lake trout and lake sturgeon population investigations, treaty fishery management assistance, habitat and ecosystem restoration, and aquatic nuisance species management. It also houses station reports and fact sheets for viewing.

The Alpena FRO web site provides information to the public and partners about Service fishery activities in Lake Huron, western Lake Erie, the St. Marys River, and the St. Clair/Detroit River waterway. The site meets the Service's Fishery Program Vision for the Future priority for "Public Use."

Anjanette Bowen

Saginaw Area High School Students Learn About Fisheries at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

On September 20, approximately 35 students from Buena Vista High School in Saginaw, MI visited Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) to learn about the Service's Refuge and Fishery programs. Rebecca Goche, Shiawassee NWR Park Ranger and Anjanette Bowen, Alpena Fishery Resources Office Fishery Biologist, hosted the event which was funded by the Service's Challenge Cost Share Program and the Buena Vista High School.

Fish sampling gear and techniques were demonstrated to allow students to learn how a variety of aquatic habitats and fish species are sampled. A pond on the refuge was surveyed with trapnets and minnow traps to allow students to participate in fishery data collection. A variety of native and invasive fish species - including northern pike, lake trout, yellow perch, brown bullhead, and sea lamprey - were on display for identification.

This project allowed inner city students the opportunity to receive hands-on environmental education about fisheries and was a collaboration between the Service's Alpena Fishery Resources Office, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, and the Challenge Cost Share Program in cooperation with Buena Vista High School.

Student and public education are important components of the Service's Fishery Program Vision for the Future and is consistent with the "Public Use" and "Partnerships and Accountability" priorities.

Anjanette Bowen